TO MOST, THE LETTER X STANDS FOR AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY. THE UNDERWORLD IS NO EXCEPTION. FOR PEOPLE WITH EVIL INTENT, IT STANDS FOR ALEX HAYDEN, THE HIRED GUN WITH NO FEAR AND A BURNING DESIRE TO TAKE HIS POSITION AS THE WORLD'S DEADLIEST AND HIGHEST PAID MERCENARY.

STAN LEE PRESENTS...

AGENT X

"HOLD THAT GHOST"

part 1 of 2

ALEX

CHRISTINE GALLHAGER

DANTE

THE INVISIBLE MAN

PREVIOUSLY

ALEX HAYDEN'S JOURNAL OF MELANCHOLY MUSINGS

THINGS THAT DEPRESS ME (not in order):

10) Not knowing my real identity (or is that "not wanting to know"...?)
9) Getting shot more than once (the first time kinda tickles)
8) Long distance relationships (I miss you, Outlaw)
7) Lack of company support (ahem...Taskmaster)
6) Stale candy corn (it's like eating teeth)
5) My theme park (it just seems so empty now)
4) "Police Academy 5" ('nuff said!)
3) Forgetting my guns at home (especially when on a mission)
2) Justin Timberlake (why's he gotta be so dreamy?)
1) Invisible targets (you'll see what I mean...)

Alright...so things didn't work out exactly as I had planned.

I had finally put together my very own company of mercenaries-for-hire: AGENCY X...named after yours truly, of course! But after a very...umm..."brief" recovery mission, I returned to my headquarters, only to watch my dreams of a cash-n-kill corporation crumble to the ground around me!

Within the first five minutes of Agency X's existence, the company was already restructuring! Both Taskmaster and Outlaw (love-o-my-life) decided to go off on their own...leaving me with a staff comprised only of my devoted secretary and a spunky kid...oh, and ME. So really, I'd say the odds are even more in my favor now! (Take that, Tasky!)

To get my mind off our sudden staffing setback, I decided to do something nice and relaxing: a high paying hit-job for some crazy cosmetics CEO named Christine Gallhager. And everything was going nice and smooth...until I realized I had left my guns back on my desk. That was right about the time I met Dante...and that wall...

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I heard about you, *Hayden*. And your super hero "healing power."

Hold on, I may actually be stuck here.

RMMFFF!

URK!

Great. So you know that my body automatically heals from just about any injury.

You sunava...

--wait, I'm not finished.

Did you also hear how I left your *mother* tied to the swing set after I--

I didn't even get to the punch...

...fine...

WHAMM!

Mr. Hayden? Are you awake?
My name is Christine Gallhager, president of Gal-Hag Cosmetics. I see you've already met Dante, my security chief.
Yer fine, Hayden. Gettup.
The man is seeing stars, Dante.
From this angle, I think I actually see angels. Or heaven.
Whoo. Head rush.
If you're finished, Mr. Hayden, I suggest we get down to business...
Fine with me!
I have some business of the unfinished variety with ol' Dante here!
I was just about to show him why I don't usually carry a sword...
SHUCK
See what I mean?

Fresh boy. Keep your hands to yourself.
Y-You... cut off my h-hand!
And now, I'm using your "h-hand"--
--to punch you in your f-face!
WHAM
I'm pleased to see that you're as sadistic as your reputation indicated.
A reputation that inspired me to employ the mercenary services of Agency X.
I will give you *two million dollars* to kill the man in this picture.
But...there's nobody in that picture but *you*.
And I saw your-- Well, let's just say I *know* you're not a guy.
I'm *all* woman, Mr. Hayden.
Just as there *is* a man in that photo, whether or not you see him.
You want me to kill an invisible Man?
You could say that...
Oh, I *see*.
Heh. Little invisibility joke for ya. Get it, "see"?
I'll take the gig! And I'll leave a coupon.
Dante's next maiming is half off.

Downtown. One hour later.
SHOWDOWN
QUILA & DAMES
...*half off*" guys! Get it?
CRASH
Geez! Tough crowd!
Seriously, though... If you don't tell me where your invisible boss is, I'm going to have to resort to even worse forms of torture...
Uhhhhh...
You asked for it! Party games it is!
THWAK
Yippee! Gather round, kids! We've got a piñata!
Owww! But why do you beat on *us*? We told you we have not seen him!
I know. *Nobody* has seen him! He's *invisible!*
THWAK
AIIIEEEEEE!

A good whacking later...

So, Meester Alice...?

The name's *Alex* Hayden. *Alex*. Got it, Maria?

Si...Alice.

How you kill a man you no can see? Si?

I'm still trying to figure it all out...

How to kill him?

No. How your piñata friend actually *was* filled with candy...

That was no candy, Alice. That was his teeth.

Teeth? Oh. I thought that was stale candy corn.

Stupid phone. Always rings when I'm in the john.

Alex, it's Christine. Any luck yet?

No, I stopped to eat a little Mexican at our boy's restaurant, but no dice.

Uh, any more *clues?*

He eats *dinner* every night at a restaurant in Little Italy called "Sigismundo's."

What better place to find the owner of a Mexican eatery? Why didn't I think of that?

Ten minutes later at Sigusmundo's.
Fine Italian Cuisine...
Whoo...
CRASH
Déjà vu, Siggy.
Uhhh.
Please! I told you everything I know! Let me out of this oven!
When the little button pops, you're fully cooked right?
Umm... Siggy? Do you own a frying pan that floats?
If not, I think I just found my--
OVEN ON
CLICK
No! No turn on the oven!
WHO
Owwwww!

Trying to sneak away, are you?
I'm not talking about you, Siggy! I mean our invisible friend!
Ahh! Ahhh! Is getting very *hot* in here!
EMERGENCY EXIT
CLICK
Come out, come out, wherever you are.
If you let me kill *you*, I *won't* cook your favorite chef.
Yahhh! Please! Someone open the door!!! Don't cook the chef!
Hellooo? Anyone invisible out here?
If you're invisible and you know it, clap your hands.
Hmm. If you want to fight, you go left. Maybe you hide in the shadows...
If you're *scared*, you go right. For the street.
WATER! WATER!
OK, there goes your favorite chef. Flame broiled, and it's your fault.
You gonna come out? Or will you make me cook the hostess, too?

If Torchy the Chef ran *that* way and didn't hit anything...

AHH! WATER! HELP!

...then you're not over *there*.

SCREECH WHUMP!

AIEEE!

Oh, my *God!* You ran over the Human Torch!

Poor Siggy. He survived being cooked alive--

--and he gets run over by a Toyota Camry.

Mr. Invisible Man? As you can see, I am a provider of fates worse than death.

How about you save the lives of a few nice people today, and let me kill you right now?

Hmm? Whatta you say?

Drop your gun--

--then we can talk.
Only if you let me wrap my fingers around your throat. Deal?
C'mere. Let's shake on it.
What the--?
10,000 volts of invisible stun-gun, charging for release. Now drop the weapon.
No way, Electro.
BUZZZZZ
BAM BAM BAM
BAM BAM BAM
YEEARRRGGHHH!

I warned you. I hate guns.

it-- It's probably just the bullets that you hate.

Speaking of bullets, you are *out!* The electric charge *forced* your fingers to discharge your weapon.

I have money... I can pay you *more*...

Mighty sportin' of ya, pal. But after that little jolt, I'm thinking, "hmm, no."

How do you feel about swords? My pal Dante doesn't think I've mastered'em quite yet... but they say practice makes perfect!

SHING

Why are you trying to kill me?

Why?

I'm actually looking forward to eating *your* teeth.

A new computer table. Some paper clips. One of those little thingies to hold my business cards.

You're going to kill me over office supplies?!?

Even if you cheat on your taxes, running a mercenary business isn't cheap.

Hey, since I can't see you could you just dive on the end of my sword?
BUZZZZZ
L-l-l-ook, p-p-pal. You're not making a very g-good case against me carving you into sm-small pieces.
BUZZZZZZ
CRACKKKLLLEE
BBZZAAATT!
AAAARRGGHH!
If I find your head, I'm gonna put a bullet in it.
:cough:
:cough:
Without a gun.

You know, fella, if I didn't have a healing power, that jolt woulda killed me. And now I'm really, *really* gonna kill you.
You don't understand.
What's to understand?
I'm *innocent*. And I can *prove* it.
You'll be killing an innocent man.
That's never stopped me before. But I *am* curious.
I'm usually just killing very naughty people.
Why would someone hire me to kill an innocent man?
Hello?
Damn.

Later. Gal-Hag Corporate Offices.
Did you know this guy has [redacted] electroshock stick that a proctologist would envy?
He developed weapons for the military. He's very well armed and he's not going to just let you [redacted] him.
Guess I'll have to think up [redacted] strategy, then.
I was told you were better than this, Hayden.
And I [redacted] told the guy was invisible--not heavily armed.
So were even!
So, why did Mr. Invisible Man with Shocky Stick proclaim his innocence?
I know my buisness cards say "no questions" but--
It's a need-to-know, and...
And I need to know.
Not that it's any of your business, but...
...[redacted] father is not an innocent man!

Wait... *what?!?* Your *father?* You're paying me to kill your *father?*

Can't you just kill him in his sleep like *normal* kids do?

Spare me your judgments.

I'm *paying* you to kill someone. But it seems you're not up for the job.

Nuh-uh. Kitten is *out* of the bag.

But I don't pull the trigger till I get the whole twisted tale.

Although I'll kill your housekeeper for *free*. This chair is *filthy*.

You should just leave.

Ms. Gallhager said it's time for you to *leave*.

OOF!

Hey, Aquaman--

BONK

--can you check my back teeth with that thing? I've had a hunk of corn stuck back there all day.

My pleasure!

That's it. I'm gonna tear your jaw outta your head.
Urrff!
Enough, both of you! Hayden, are you in or out?
In. But the rate for patricide has gone up. Four million. Two mil now. Two when your old [redacted] is worm food.
Whatever. As long [redacted] nobody can trace my father's murder back to me, a few million is nothing to [redacted]. Dante-- the money?
When this is done, you're gonna meet the hook up close and personal.
More "up close and personal" than in my mouth?
By the way, Dante, do those hooks come in lefty and righty, like shoes?
I dunno. Why?
Well...
SEE
...now [redacted] have a reason to find out.

Ten minutes later. Outside Gal-Hag Corporate Offices.
Ok, fella. How'm I gonna find you?
Sniff Sniff That's an odd smell.
Almost smells like... that electroshocky thing... That's no coincidence.
Hey, Invisible Daddy! You hunting me now?
Tell ya what. Make your ■■■■. I'll even put down the ■■■■ of money ■■ I have both hands free to chop you into little meat cubes.
It's a revolving door, freak. Keep it moving!
You could have just walked away, Mr. Invisible Man. But you've decided to turn the tables on me. Nice strategy. Too bad ■ won't work.
CLUK
What's with the weirdo in the door?
Maybe he's stuck.
Shhhh. I'm hunting invisible wabbit.
And the wabbit is hunting me right back.
Hey, let me out!

Say, pal. Wanna tell me what's up with the guy in the door?

Actually, it's *not* the guy in the door that's the problem. It's the *other* guy...!

Ohhhkayyy. The "other guy"? Is he "invisible"?

Actually, yee.

Look, buddy, I -- *Ooof!* What just hit me?!?

That'd be the "other guy". Don't move.

This won't hurt nearly as much as it appears...or doesn't appear. Whatever.

SLICE!

ARRGGHHH!

BUZZZZZ

BZZZAAAPP!
Aaaggghhh! I hate that thing!
OPEN
Are you okay? I thought you were crazy, but then I felt that guy! There really is an Invisible Man?
Yep. You see which way he went?
Kidding.
Invisible... there's really an Invisible Man.
Get outta my way!
Stop him before he goes into that store!
Hey, it's the "Galactus Chef Supply" store. Man, that Devourer of Worlds loves to eat.

FLUMMPPP!
Hey! Cut it out! You're making it very difficult to get a clean kill.
Ordinarily, I'd pump a bullet into your brain, and I'm home for Oprah.
But since I can't see you, the old standards just aren't working.
So I'm switching weapons to something with a little more boom behind it.
Wait! Is that a... a...hand grenade?!?
CLIKK
Not just a hand grenade--
CLUNK
CLUNK

BARROOM!
GALACTUS
"It's two hand grenades."
TO BE CONCLUDED... WITH A BANG!